



## State of Connecticut

### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

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**CHAIRMAN**  
HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE

**MEMBER**  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Testimony before the Energy and Technology Committee  
March 3, 2008

In support of

### **HB 5682: "AN ACT CONCERNING HIGH SPEED BROADBAND ACCESS".**

House Co-Chairman, State Representative Steve Fontana  
Senate Co-Chairman, State Senator John Fonfara  
Ranking Member, State Senator Thomas Herlihy  
Ranking Member, State Representative Sean Williams

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I want to thank the committee for raising this bill for consideration. The purpose of this proposal is to expand high speed internet access to all unserved areas in Connecticut. *Access to high speed internet has become an absolute necessity. There is truly a digital divide in CT.* It is difficult to believe that a small state in proximity to such a large urban area like New York City still has areas where one cannot access high speed internet service.

This issue has continued to plague many of the small towns of NW Connecticut for years. While there has been some progress, we still have a ways to go with almost one thousand homes and businesses without high speed service. (See attachment) Telecommuting is becoming quite prevalent in the rural towns and we have seen a rise in home-based businesses. These types of businesses have

stimulated our local economy and created jobs. But for those without high speed internet service, their businesses are being unfairly disadvantaged.

Ironically, we have lucrative tax credits for the film industry, yet I have a film producer in my district (who won an Oscar for his documentary) who cannot work in his Connecticut home since he does not have access to high speed internet. One just cannot compete and work in the global environment without this service.

The industry is unregulated by the Federal government and our DPUC has no regulatory authority whatsoever regarding high speed service. As unregulated entities, they are under no obligation to bring the service to low density areas. The most rural U.S. states apparently have access to Federal grant programs to extend lines to very remote rural or economically distressed areas. We are not rural or distressed enough.

Nine states have taken steps to address this problem. Connecticut needs to act as well.

Like many other states, this bill creates a broadband development authority. In this case, it is through our Dept of Community and Economic Development. There are a variety of funding options in the other states such as incorporating a tax on communication providers' revenue, state funded grants, or loan programs and tax incentives. Massachusetts' new program will be funded through general obligation bonds. Mississippi offers tax credits to companies that invest in providing service to rural areas.

NW Connecticut is not the only area of our state facing this challenge. Small towns in Eastern Connecticut also are not completely built out. It is imperative that the state take action. I look forward to working on this proposal to create a mechanism to insure that the communication providers extend lines into the unserved areas. This is not a matter that can wait.

Thank you again for your consideration.

Roberta Willis  
State Representative

Town	HP	Aerial	Underground	Total	Cost A	Cost UG	Total	Cost/Home Hc
<b>Canaan</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>35807</b>	<b>8703</b>	<b>44510</b>	<b>\$ 169,859.46</b>	<b>\$ 60,546.84</b>	<b>\$ 230,406.29</b>	<b>\$ 2,618.25</b>
Miles	6.78	1.65	8.43					
<b>Norfolk</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>84581</b>	<b>4822</b>	<b>89403</b>	<b>\$ 401,231.12</b>	<b>\$ 33,546.69</b>	<b>\$ 434,777.81</b>	<b>\$ 6,393.79</b>
Miles	16.02	0.91	16.93					
<b>N Canaan</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>18647</b>	<b>12111</b>	<b>30758</b>	<b>\$ 88,456.71</b>	<b>\$ 84,256.32</b>	<b>\$ 172,713.03</b>	<b>\$ 3,454.26</b>
Miles	3.53	2.29	5.83					
<b>Salisbury</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>52,874</b>	<b>61,426</b>	<b>114,300</b>	<b>\$ 250,821.04</b>	<b>\$ 427,341.15</b>	<b>\$ 678,162.18</b>	<b>\$ 4,012.79</b>
Miles	10.01	11.63	21.65					
<b>Sharon</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>165927</b>	<b>75866</b>	<b>241793</b>	<b>\$ 786,025.14</b>	<b>\$ 527,800.34</b>	<b>\$1,313,825.48</b>	<b>\$ 4,423.65</b>
Miles	31.43	14.37	45.79					
<b>Totals</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>357872</b>	<b>162944</b>	<b>520817</b>	<b>\$1,696,393.46</b>	<b>\$1,133,491.33</b>	<b>\$2,829,884.79</b>	<b>\$ 4,211.14</b>
Miles	67.78	30.86	98.64					